

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8986

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SEDU, PINT, DM

SUBJ: REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT CHANGES BENIN SCHOOL YEAR

REF: A. COTONOU 1681, B. COTONOU 1645

1. IN ORDER TO INTEGRATE STATE TEACHING SYSTEM WITH NATIONAL (FOOD) PRODUCTION CAMPAIGN, CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF BENIN'S PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY DECIDED AT OCTOBER 11-15 SESSION CHANGE ACADEMIC YEAR TO PERIOD FEBROARY 15 TO DECEMBER 15 INSTEAD OF TRADITIONAL SEPTEMBER TO JUNE DATES. UNDER SLOGAL "NEW SCHOOL EQUALS UNIT OF PRODUCTION," NEW SYSTEM DESIGNED TO PERMIT STUDENTS TO WORK IN FIELDS DURING GROWING SEASON AND HAVE VACATION DURING HARVEST PERIOD. TRANSITIONAL PERIOD UNTIL FEB 1977 IS TO BE DEVOTED TO IDEOLOGY, BASIC LITERACY COURSES FOR RURAL MASSES, AND AGRICULTURAL FIELD WORK.

2. IN ANNOUNCING RADICAL CHANGE TO SCHOOL YSSTEM, COMMITTEE'S COMMUNIQUE ALSO STATED THAT FIRST NATIONAL PRODUCTION CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN "CLEAR SUCCESS," WITH CROP PRODUCTION, ESPECIALLY CEREALS, GREATER THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS,
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DESPITE ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS. COMMUNIQUE ALSO

REFERRED TO "PARADOX" OF CURRENT FOOD SHORTAGES, FOR WHICH IT BLAMED "UNSCRUPULOUS BUSINESSMEN AND SMUGGLERS ACTING ON BEHALF OF THEIR CLASS INTEREST AS STATELESS BOURGEOIS COMPRADOR AGENTS AND SERVILE INSTRUMENTS OF IMPERIALISM". THESE INDIVIDUALS WERE SAID TO BE "POISONING" THE MINDS OF THE PEOPLE WITH RUMORS. OBSERVING THAT "POISON" MOST EVIDENT IN URBAN AREAS, COMMUNIQUE SAID IT WAS IMPERATIVE TO INSTITUTE NEW SCHOOL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO CONTERACT THESE INFLUENCES.

3. COMMENT. REACTIONS TO CENTRAL COMMITTEE'S ANNOUNCEMENT HAVE RANGED FROM DISBELIEF TO PASSIVE RESIGNATION. LIKE SO MANY REVOLUTIONARY PROPOSALS WHICH ARE IDEOLOGICALLY "CORRECT" BUT IMPRACTICABLE, POSSIBILITY OF CHANGING ACADEMIC SYSTEM WAS ADMITTED BUT FEW THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BE PUT INTO EFFECT. IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM, HOWEVER, MOST SCHOOLS APPEAR PREPARED TO CONTINUE WITH EXISTING CURRICULUM.

4. COMMITTEE STATEMENT LINKING ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SCHOOL AND NEED TO COUNTER RUMORS SPREAD BY THE "STARVERS OF THE PEOPLE" IS FURTHER INDICATION THAT GPRB IS INDEED CONCERNED OVER PUBLIC DISCONTENT OVER FOOD SHORTAGES (REFTELS), BUT IS NOT YET PREPARED TO CHANGE ITS PLANS FOR COPING WITH SITUATION.
THOMPSON

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